857 524 Min Chia children have quite a large variety of toys, all made locally, for the cheap Japanese toy, or its Shanghai-made competitor, have not yet reached the rural parts of Yunnan. Hobby horses, spinning tops, wooden swords and spears, marbles, dolls, and small wooden toy water mills, are the most elaborate and enduring, for many toys are made of paper for some special occasion, such as the Kwan Yin festival and the New Year. Kites are not regarded strictly as toys, for they are also flown by men as well as by boys. The kite flying season is conventionally limited to the spring, and any one who tried to fly a kite at other seasons would be considered eccentric. This curious idea prevails all over China, but I have never been able to hear a satisfactory explanation. The kite is a Chinese invention, and of great antiquity, often made in the shape of a dragon. It seems possible that it was originally a representation of the Rain Dragon, flown in spring in connection with some rain making rite, and that some faint memory of this inspires the convention which limits kite flying to that season. The fire balloons called K'un Ming lamps, mentioned earlier, which are now regarded as toys, are also only flown at one season for a limited period, and some connection with the Shu Pao ceremony is admitted.

Children also play a number of round games such as hide and seek, touch-last, hop scotch, and one, of Chinese origin, called "breaking the city wall", in which a line of boys hold hands and one other has to charge them and [304] break through, but without using his hands or fists. Except for the last, which is a boys' game, all the others are played by girls and boys together, in the courtyard of their home, for as the Min Chia have never bound the feet of their girls, and the custom is now rapidly disappearing among the Chinese and half Chinese, little girls are quite as active as their brothers. In recent years the introduction of basket-ball as a school game has led to this becoming the national

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857 ball game of China. It has several advantages for the
524 Chinese, for it can be played on a small piece of ground, which is often all that is available, and it does not require the special boots needed for football, which few Chinese schoolboys could afford. In most parts of China the ground is hard and dry for a large part of the year, and any game such as Rugby Football, or Association, in which the players are likely to fall, or be barged down, is dangerous unless played on a specially softened and prepared ground, and that of course is rarely available. Basket ball, introduced by the schools and also played by soldiers in barracks, is thus the only foreign game known to the Min Chia.

857 When a boy or girl is seven years old schooling begins.
872 Before that, in well-to-do families, the child will have already been taught the elements of writing and have begun to learn to read. During the school years most children live at home, only those who attend the Middle Schools and come from distant villages, boarding at the school. Although elementary education is widespread, only a small proportion of boys, and still fewer girls go on to the
883 Middle School. At thirteen or fourteen school ends for
874 most boys, and they either begin to do full time work on the land, or are apprenticed to a tradesman. The apprentice system is only followed in the city, for in the villages there is no trade but agriculture or lake fishing. The apprentice may be engaged at any age over fourteen years, and is bound to serve his master for four years. In return he must be taught the craft, fed, lodged in the shop, and given a new suit of coat and trousers every New Year's day. He receives no pay during these years, but he shares in the family festivities, and on the occasion of the festival of the God of Wealth, locally known as the Golden Armoured God (Chin Chia Ts'ai Shen), when the merchants picnic near the God's temple outside the west gate, the appren-

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slow time, putting down the chopsticks after each mouthful, and waiting a minute or two till the host motions his guests to continue. But when the boys bring in two more dishes, while of the first two, still hardly touched, one remains untasted, the host, after another suitable pause, and a further round of wine, which by now is beginning to have a distinct effect on the faces of the guests, says, with a friendly wave of the chopsticks, " Please help yourselves". The guests then begin to eat heartily, no longer putting down the chopsticks after each mouthful, and only pausing to drink wine at the invitation of their neighbour or their host. More dishes are brought in, and some of the half eaten ones taken out, for the ladies to taste, and the stiff manners of the first part of the meal give way to an increasingly uproarious informality. Talk is loud and slightly fuddled, and is almost drowned by the sharp cries of two neighbours engaged in one of the wine contest games which enliven Chinese feasts. The simplest of these games, introduced into Europe by the agency of the British Navy, is still popular with the Min Chia.

The two contestants place two full cups of wine between them. Each then raises his right hand and brings it down with the fist in one of three positions ; either palm open, which is called "paper", or fist clenched, which is called "stone", or middle fingers held apart, which is called "scissors". If both contestants have chosen the same gesture, they have to repeat it until they are unlike, for the game consists of three rounds, the one with two out of three winners being successful. If A clenches his fist, i.e. makes " stone " and B has an open palm, then B wins that round, for "paper wraps stone". But next time A makes open fingers, "scissors", and B again has open palm, so B loses that round, for "scissors cut paper". Each gesture conquers one other and is conquered by another ; paper

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574 wraps stone, stone blunts scissors, scissors cut paper. The
524 loser has to drink both cups of wine in two draughts, this
273 being called " *Kan Pei* " " dry cup."

By the time this game has been played three or four times
574 most of the losers are unconscious of what food they are
264 eating, which is a pity, for it is delicious. Fish from the lake are served whole in brown sweet sauce, and are pulled to pieces with the chopsticks. Half-way through the feast a sweet dish of rice with a brown sugar sauce is served, and eaten not with chopsticks, but with china spoons. No rice is eaten till nearly the end of the meal, and some do not eat any at all. It is considered both unseemly and imprudent to drink wine after rice has been eaten, consequently the rice is only served last, when the guests have drunk their fill. The host must not ask for the rice first, for that would be a hint to the guests to stop drinking, but one of the guests, late in the feast, may ask for rice. The others can continue to drink if they wish to, but when the last dish, the " Fire Pot," is brought on, the wine is finished off. The Fire Pot is a circular trough-like dish, with a charcoal brazier in the centre, and the food consists of raw vegetables and thin slices of meat which are put into the circular trough and cooked lightly on the table, the guests helping themselves as the process continues. This dish is in fact the original from which the well-known Japanese Sukiyaki is derived. In Yunnan it is not eaten as a separate meal, but as the last dish at a feast, or on a picnic, where it has the advantage of being kept hot in the open air.

The host must not be the first to stop eating, even if he has long since had enough, he must toy with some food until at least one of the guests has finished. Each person, as he finishes, lays his chopsticks on the top of his bowl, and lifting it, bows to the host and the others, showing the inside of the bowl, which must be quite free from any